Delaware Public Health District
Dedicated to your health

TUBERCULOSIS (TB) FACT SHEET

WHAT IS TUBERCULOSIS?

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by bacteria that typically attacks the lungs. Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. As a result, two TB-related conditions exist: latent TB infection (LTBI) and TB disease.

HOW DO YOU GET TUBERCULOSIS?

TB bacteria are spread through the air from one person to another. The TB bacteria are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, speaks, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected. People with TB disease are most likely to spread it to people they spend time with every day. This includes family members, friends, and coworkers or schoolmates.

SYMPTOMS

People who have latent TB infection do not feel sick, do not have any symptoms, and cannot spread TB to others. TB disease in the lungs may cause symptoms such as:

- A bad cough that lasts 3 weeks or longer
- Chest pain
- Coughing up blood or sputum
- Weakness
- Fatigue
- Weight loss
- No appetite
- Chills
- Fever
- Night sweats

TREATMENT

TB disease can be treated by taking several drugs for 6 to 12 months. It is very important that people who have TB disease finish the medicine, and take the drugs exactly as prescribed. Discuss treatment options with your doctor. A nurse from the health department may need to watch you take your medicine. This is called directly observed therapy (DOT).

PREVENTION

- If you think you have been exposed to someone with TB disease, you should contact your doctor or local health department about getting a TB skin test or a special TB blood test.
- It is very important that people who have TB disease finish the medicine, and take the drugs exactly as prescribed to prevent spreading the disease to others.

DPHD EFFORTS:

Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the Delaware Public Health District (DPHD). The DPHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education.